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Committee on Relations with the Host Country

Letter dated 28 June 2000 from the Deputy Counsellor for Host Country Affairs of the United States Mission to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country

Enclosed please find the text of note verbale No. HC-26-00, dated 28 June 2000, from the United States Mission to the United Nations addressed to the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations (see annex), responding to the latter's letter dated 11 June 2000 addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations by the Permanent Representative of Iraq regarding the arrival in New York of Dr. Mithal Sabri Jassim on 6 June 2000 (A/AC.154/331).

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate the present letter and text of the note verbale as a document of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country.

(*Signed*) Russell F. **Graham**
Deputy Counsellor for Host Country Affairs

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Annex to the letter dated 28 June 2000 from the Deputy Counsellor for Host Country Affairs of the United States Mission to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country

The United States Mission to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations and wishes to refer to the letter dated 11 June 2000 addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations by the Permanent Representative of Iraq regarding the arrival in New York of Dr. Mithal Sabri Jassim on 6 June 2000 (A/AC.154/331).

The United States Mission recognizes that the Permanent Mission of Iraq requested, by means of its note verbale DLG/2000/512, an appropriate entry visa to allow Mithal Sabri Jassim, a member of the General Federation of Iraqi Women, to come to New York to attend the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on women's issues between 5 and 9 June 2000. In response to the Permanent Mission's official request, the Department of State requested that the United States Embassy in Amman, Jordan, issue Dr. Jassim an official G-2 visa as a member of the Iraqi delegation.

When Dr. Jassim arrived at the American Embassy to apply for her visa, she clearly stated that she was not affiliated with the Government of Iraq, but was rather a member of a non-governmental organization. As the Permanent Mission is aware, official visas are accorded only to government officials and their dependants travelling to the United States on official government business. Representatives of non-governmental organizations coming to the United Nations are given tourist visas, and Dr. Jassim was accordingly issued a tourist visa based solely on her own representations regarding her affiliation and her purpose in coming to the United States.

United States immigration regulations require photographing and fingerprinting of persons from certain countries, including the Republic of Iraq, holding non-immigrant visas other than G or A (diplomatic visas). As a representative of a non-governmental organization travelling on a visa other than G or A, Dr. Jassim was subject to these photographing and fingerprinting requirements. Such photographing and fingerprinting is performed in an enclosed area adjacent to the international arrivals area. This area is not, as the Permanent Representative's letter suggests, an area designated for suspects and criminals.

The treatment of Dr. Jassim in no way represents a breach of the host country's obligations under the Headquarters Agreement, nor did it represent a denial of access to an individual travelling to the United States to participate in the activities of the United Nations convened in the Headquarters District. It is precisely for this reason that Dr. Jassim was issued a United States visa in the first place. The United States Mission continues to support the participation of non-governmental organizations in the important work of the United Nations and looks forward to the time when immigration procedures required for national security reasons can become less stringent.